

BEND OF ISLANDS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION INC. NEWSLETTER

President Alan Bonny 9712 0648 C/- Post Office Kangaroo Ground 3097 - Editor John McCallum 9712 0319

Number 36
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What Native's Flowering?

Botanical Name: *Tetraetheca ciliata*

Common Name: Hairy Pink-bells, Black-eyed Susan

Family: Tremandraceae (A small Australian plant family)

Flowering period: Winter

A very colourful long-flowering small shrub, with masses of brilliant magenta, perfumed flowers hanging from wiry stems. The flowers are bell shaped, consisting of four petals with a black centre. The black centre is actually the dark purple floral parts in the middle of the petals, and which give the plant its common name, Black-eyed Susan. The pendulous bell-like flowers are very showy and the petals spread out as they age, revealing the black centre. The four sepals at the base of the flower curl up towards the stem.

The foliage is small consisting of roundish leaves under 1 cm long, in whorls of threes or fours along the stems at the base of the short hairy flower stalks.

A low understorey plant, 30-60 cm high by 30-60 cm wide, in Damp, Valley and Dry Sclerophyll Forests. In moist shady situations pink Bells grows into a sprawling straggly shrub often tending to lie flat unless supported by other plants. On dry ridges it is more erect and bushy. The shrub tolerates a wide range of soil types including heavy clay, sandy and lime.

Propagate from tip cuttings, preferably from half-hardened wood.

A long-lived and prolific-flowering plant that gives a bright display of colour in winter.

President's Report

The Bend of Islands is what it is today because of the interest, enthusiasm and efforts of the residents. If the ELZ is to prevail long into the future it will be because of a continuation of this enthusiasm and effort.

The BICA committee is a community representative organisation and it involves itself with the appropriate authorities on many issues that have an impact on the area. These include road making, local government restructure and land subdivision amongst many others. During such negotiations BICA has always enjoyed credibility as an organisation with a high environmental profile. It is important that we maintain this.

Two ways in which we can maintain the environmental credibility of BICA are through the 'Land for Wildlife' scheme and the 'Atlas of Victorian Wildlife'. The Land for Wildlife program has been outlined in past Newsletters and it recognises the efforts of landowners to enhance or create wildlife habitat on their properties. Many individual landowners in the ELZ are already part of the scheme and it would be appropriate for addition of more such properties, neighbourhood groups or even the ELZ as a whole to become involved.

The Atlas of Victorian Wildlife is a computer database of locality records of Victorian vertebrate species. Records have been kept and collated since 1972 but those for our area are incomplete and for the species listed the last records date back many years. There is a need to keep the information up-to-date and comprehensive. BICA will collate and lodge the data but records need to contain details of time, place and activity. Keep a diary and let us have the details as soon as is practicable. Contact any BICA committee member or write if you want more details about either scheme. Start recording your sightings, big or small, for lodging with the Wildlife Atlas.

Alan Bonny

Have Your Say!

Once again the Newsletter is made up of contributions from the committee and the regulars (thanks Sheila!) A few people, however, have taken the opportunity to respond to the invitation to contribute to this where readers are invited to have their say on any issue, either in response to an article in the Newsletter or otherwise. The issue of free feeding of animals has provoked a number of comments.

Dear Editor,

I thought I would add to that most interesting article which was in the last newsletter. The increases of chough numbers was mentioned and their possible effect on our orchids. Cam Beardsell, a well known biologist who lives near Dunmoochin in Cottle's Bridge, considers that increased chough numbers, caused by extra feeding have been responsible for the disappearance of orchids on this hillside except where he has an area enclosed. Alan and Carol Bonny have both actually seen choughs dig up orchids. There could also be other factors such as lack of burning but the McCallums have burnt a significant area and still report a decline in orchids over the years. The subjective assessment of chough numbers suggests that their population has increased.

When the kookaburras are feeding their young one feels that one should help by putting out lots of mincemeat. I will tell you a story. When I was studying kangaroos in the Pilbara District of WA I also did a study on marsupial native cats (quolls). I happened to trap a female with six

young, put them in a big cage and tried to rear them. We gave them the best cuts of beef, kangaroo and sometimes a bit of emu. The mum provided milk. They thrived and grew for many weeks but then slowly developed paralysis of their hind legs and finally died. Their 'excellent' diet had not contained vitamins which they (and Kookaburras) would normally get from the entrails of their prey and possibly insects.

Yet it is fun, especially for kids, to be in touch with the wildlife by feeding them. So what should we do? Can we compromise? Animals normally feed in a wide range of places. If we put out lots of food they will hang around, numbers may increase and upset the balance in ways of which we are not aware. If you really want to feed wildlife **ONLY PROVIDE VERY SMALL SNACKS** occasionally. They will drop in on their way around to their other feeding sites. Choughs won't rear excess young by producing additional clutches of eggs and the wildlife will generally have a normal natural diet. Be hard-hearted. Don't let the animals train you! Don't be bluffed by the choughs or shed tears when that pathetic little parrot hangs on your window and stares at you pretending to look emaciated!

Best if we do not intrude on the wild life at all. However if we do, we should be responsible and careful. There may be more at stake than we think, especially in the long term.

Tim Ealy

Dear Editor,

Ten minutes after I read 'Food For Thought' by Frank Pierce and 'Encountering wildlife without feeding' by Stephen Platt (DC&NR) in BICA Newsletter number 35, there was a brushtail possum standing outside our back door staring in at us through the lower pane.

I opened the door and the little fellow followed me across the room to the fridge. When we gave him a piece of bread he happily sauntered off into the night, blissfully unaware of the dilemma we'd faced as we offered his entree.

I think "Petey" possum at the Brown House was the first one we fed. I'd spotted him at the base of a tree one night and quietly called Barb to come out slowly in case he scarpered up the tree. To our amazement and delight he went running straight to Barb and a friendship was forged.

We rigged up a sensor outside at Petey's feeding spot, so that every night a buzzer in the house would alert us to watch the floorshow through the window.

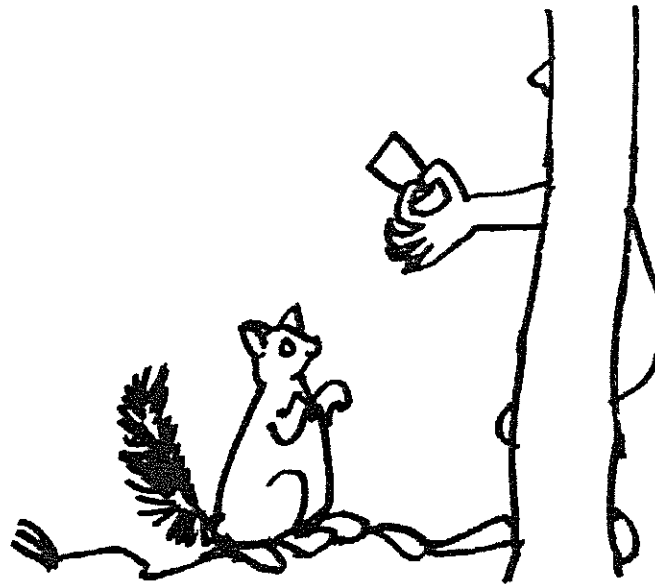
Petey's certificate of social accomplishment was possibly gained at the Flannagan, Dhillon, or O'Brien schools of social etiquette.

Kristina Mueller gave us a personal introduction to one of our favourite brushies. She fed it traditional European crispbread, which makes me feel less sheepish about buying it expensive grain bread instead of cheap plain white.

Paying our possums to entertain us nightly is going to be a difficult addiction to give up. Each has their own endearing repertoire of tricks to obtain a snack. Several allow us to stroke them while they eat.

Is anyone interested in joining our POSSUM FEEDERS ANONYMOUS chapter? We'll be living one night at a time.

Yours sincerely, Alan Bluhm



Stop Press!
Wood duck seen checking out the old nest tree at the Bonny's!

Trivia For All

A few Saturdays ago a motley collection of locals turned up at Bob and Trish Millington's house for a Trivia Night. Yes, a genuine, old-fashioned daggy Trivia Night!

Those who couldn't come really missed out. If you'd been worrying about mortgages, teenagers, putting on weight, or what on earth is going to happen to the car this week, all would have been forgotten. It was a great night made better by Bob's questions.

I mean, how long was the Hundred Years War? Well, you are dead wrong! And more of the same.

Of course Alan Bonny had to make a chauvinistic spectacle of himself by answering a question about what big change occurred in the 70s with driving rules: his answer was that women could apply for a license. You'll keep Alan!

The guests, as usual, were dressed in their usual BICA gear, but Bob outshone us all with the full penguin suit. I can't remember the feet but I don't think he wore Adidas!

I suspect we are going to have another one, but as Millo is off on one of those Bush Bashes for a couple of weeks it will hopefully be a while later. Next time don't miss out!

Sheil

Stop Press: The plovers are back on the dam opposite Wellers!

Do Foxes Fly?

or

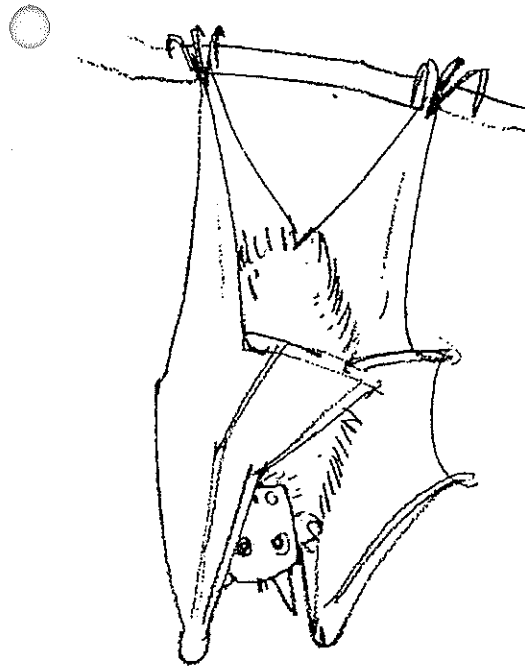
Bats Around The Bend

I first became aware of the presence of Grey-headed Flying Foxes or Fruit Bats as they are often called, in the Christmas Hills area around midnight on the 16 May 1996, while walking home after another marathon Co-op Directors meeting.

On reaching the entrance to my house I heard a loud flapping noise and looked up in time to catch the silhouette of what I first thought was a large bird flying overhead. My first thought was that the Powerful Owl I had seen a couple of months ago was back again but I quickly dismissed this possibility knowing that Powerful Owls barely make a sound when they fly and anyway the silhouette was the wrong shape.

While I was standing in the dark pondering what I had seen, I was again alerted to the sound of large flapping wings. "IT" had returned and had landed in a large Ironbark next to the house. This particular tree, like other Ironbarks in the surrounding bush was flowering. I could hear whatever it was, scrambling around amongst the foliage and it was making strange, high pitched shrieks and squealing noises which I was not familiar with.

I raced inside to get my spotlight and binoculars and quickly returned to the Ironbark hoping that whatever it was would still be there. Imagine my surprise and delight to discover that the mystery creature was a Grey-headed Flying Fox, the last thing I had expected to see in the bush around Christmas Hills.



While watching this individual feeding on the Ironbark blossoms with the aid of the red filter on my spotlight, it regularly made high pitched squeals like I had heard earlier. I could hear similar sounds coming from other trees close by and it wasn't long before other bats arrived to feed in the same tree. There was a great deal of noise and commotion as they jockeyed for position and regularly flew from one flowering Ironbark to another with slow but noisy flaps of their wings.

On this first occasion, I was aware of perhaps three or four individuals. Over the next few weeks the Flying Foxes would regularly arrive to feed in the Ironbarks within 2 hours of sun set, but they were not present every night. Up until I last saw them on 19th June, the maximum I was aware of on any night was eight.

Over the next few days I checked with other residents on the Co-op and a few "bat people" I know and I was excited to learn that this is the first record of Grey-headed Flying Foxes in the Christmas Hills area and also the first record of this species feeding on indigenous trees in the Melbourne Region.

Apart from the colony in the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne, reported sightings of Flying Foxes have been largely confined to the inner suburbs extending east as far as Mitcham and Scorseby. All feeding observations to date have been in commonly planted exotic as well as native trees.

The visitors to Christmas Hills probably came from the colony in the Royal Botanic Gardens which are about 30 km away "as the fruit bat flies" but how did they know the Ironbarks at Christmas Hills were flowering?

According to the literature, over a few months, individuals may forage over hundreds of square kilometers. Feeding groups, which rarely exceed 10 individuals, leave their camp at dusk and fly to foraging sites usually within 15 km of their camp, but they have been recorded traveling distances up to 50km, returning to their camp again by dawn. So traveling to Christmas Hills and back from Melbourne is well within their physical abilities, but it's still pretty impressive, I think.

I wonder how long they could sustain this routine during the winter months given the energy used to fly the 60 km round trip and the work involved in gathering small amounts of pollen and nectar, particularly as they would also be expending con-

siderable energy just keeping warm at this time of the year.

The Grey-headed Flying fox is a restricted breeding and roosting species and because of this it is on the list of threatened wildlife in Victoria. Their distribution extends from central Queensland through to south-west Victoria. The species is only found in Australia and the colony in the Royal Botanic Gardens, in Melbourne is the most southerly megabat colony in the world.

The colony in the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne was first established in 1980 and up to 1000 now congregate there in summer and autumn. Numbers fall to a few hundred or less over winter but the colony has been occupied year round since 1986.

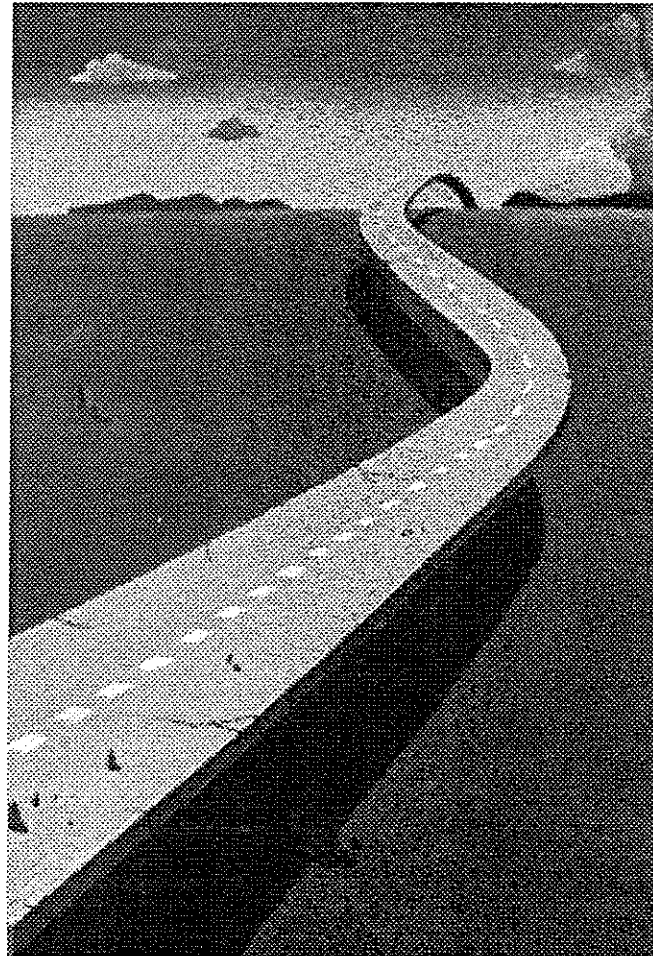
In Melbourne, the Grey-headed Flying Fox feeds predominantly on the fruit, nectar and pollen of non-indigenous cultivated plants in parks, gardens, plantations and roadsides. Favored exotic plants include Moreton Bay Fig, Cherry Plum, Apricot and other Stone Fruits.

Food for Grey-headed Flying Foxes is likely to be most limiting in winter when fruits and a wide variety of flowers are scarce. The most important winter food source in Melbourne is the non-indigenous Spotted Gum which has been planted extensively throughout inner parks and gardens and along suburban streets. However, several minor species including Yellow Gum and Red Ironbark are critical winter food sources.

If the Melbourne colony continues to expand, the Box-Ironbark Woodlands of Christmas Hills are

likely to become increasingly important to Grey-headed Flying Foxes. In the future, we can probably expect more regular visits from these fascinating animals during the winter months to feed on flowering Ironbarks.

by Steve Craig



Henley Road

At the last General Meeting a few questions were asked about the works on Henley Road. Since then I have talked with Glen Terry, the Environmental Works Officer at the Shire of Nillumbik.

His answers:

Yes, there will be more environmental planting done. Some areas have been direct seeded but Glen is not confident of a good result as it was not the best time of year.

The hessian stays until it breaks down. Some of it covers areas that have been direct seeded.

The area in front of Barb and Alan's is being monitored and hessian will be used to stabilise the batters if necessary. A date for the final works has not yet been finalised.

The roadside verge along this stretch of Henley Road is looking spectacular at the moment with a profusion of indigenous Acacias. If you have not noticed, slow down while driving and enjoy them. Even better, go for a walk and discover many more spring flowers.

Alan Bonny

Mount Lofty Visit.

A number of BICA members attended joined a visit to Mount Lofty by the Friends of the Warrandyte State Park (FOWSP). This account of the visit is reprinted with permission from the FOWSP Newsletter.

The visit, on Thursday May 23, to one of Warrandyte's promised new Parks attracted around 20 Fowspians. The location was Mount Lofty at Wonga Park, one of two areas that the Coalition promised (prior to the election) would be incorporated into the Warrandyte State park if they won office.

The walk was led by Flora Anderson who filled us in on the latest developments according to Lorraine Elliott., the local member of Parliament. It seems that Mt Lofty is to be purchased by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, but first it must be valued and no one is prepared to say how long that may take. Meanwhile we keep the champagne on ice.

Our first stop was the wetland. Although there were obvious signs that rabbits were inside the fence, the grazing damage was confined to the Hop Goodenia (*Goodenia ovata*) bushes. The sedges (*Carex appressa*) and paperbarks (*Melaleuca ericifolia*) that had been planted by the Friends about a year ago had grown well and now formed a dense barrier between the swamp and the advancing weeds. Water Ribbons (*Triglochin sp*), Millfoil (*Myriophyllum sp*) as well as other aquatic and semi aquatic plants were thriving. Also doing well were several Flecked Flat Sedge (*Carex gummii*), a rare and regionally vulnerable species, planted in

the swamp as part of the Park's species enrichment program.

As we left the wetland, Flora explained that the walk would be in the form of a circuit taking about two hours to complete and that people could 'bail out' at any time. 'We go this way' we said, pointing to a near vertical grassy slope. She cheerfully assured us that this would be the only steep track on the walk - a statement that later proved to be slightly inaccurate! However, from the top the view was superb taking in the river flats to the east across the old meanders, now filled with water, to the mountains of the Great Dividing Range on the horizon. Looking in the other direction it was just as spectacular with views of the densely forested escarpment of the Warrandyte Gorge.

Following a ridgeline downhill we came to the confluence of Brushy Creek and the Yarra River opposite Witton's Reserve. Then at last a flat track which followed the winding river back upstream. Along the way our orchid-spotting whizz found dozens of sun orchids (*Thelymitra sp*) scattered in patches close to the Burgan, and then came the highlight - a dense colony of Trim Greenhood (*Pterostylis concinna*) leaves and flower buds close to the track. Estimated number of individuals - several hundreds. This particular orchid has not been seen in WSP for many years until as small group was found at Pound Bend last year. This new occurrence now more than doubles the population and, together with the sun orchids, in makes it even more important that Mt Lofty be incorporated into the Park.

There was a further climb up the hill, where once again we admired the view. But as we watched the

bulldozers in action on the land to the east of Homestead Road our hearts sank. For this flood plain, together with land on the opposite side of the river is the site where the huge Heritage and Country Club complex is to be built. Work on the land, it seemed, had already begun even though the requested management plan had not at that time been lodged with the Yarra Ranges Shire. We returned to our cars somewhat weary, but nevertheless having been given a taste for Mt Lofty. One that I'm sure will have most of us coming back for more.

Pat Coupar (FOWSP)



A Name of Our Own

Following representation to the Nillumbik Shire regarding officially recognising 'The Bend of Islands' as a name for our area and on the suggestion of the Shire, petitions are being circulated for signatures. The Shire are happy to back the idea provided that there is substantial local support. The area concerned is basically that enclosed by the Yarra River, Watson's Creek and the Sugarloaf Dam. Petitions will be available at all functions including the Saturday markets (Cafe Benders), Fire Brigade activities and BICA meetings. The Committee also have copies. Contact any member.

Stop Press!

Proposed walk from the Bend of Islands to the Panton Hill pub for dinner on Sunday October 20.

The Panton Hill hostelry is well-known to those travelling to nowhere-in-particular (St Andrews?). It boasts good pub fare, an old pub atmosphere and still has good pub prices. A great place for a down-to-earth Sunday nosh.

To set the digestive juices in motion we propose walking there. Its really not very far: 10 km is the proposal or you can join in along the way. The less lithe may choose to simply meet at the pub.

The walk will follow Long Gully Creek (DCNR reserve) after a jaunt from the aqueduct at Calwell's Road. The only catch is a steep climb of about 1 km to get to the pub at the end! Estimated time of the walk is about 3 hours along easy roads and tracks. Start at about 3.00 PM.

To return we could have a bus (this would need 20 people to come out at about \$10 per head) or we could work a car shuffle. Please phone 9712 0060 to register your interest.

Tony and Robina

Safe Household Chemical Collection

If you have surplus or waste chemicals from your household, garage, garden or any other place you can dispose of them on November 9 at the Yan Yean Road depot of the Nillumbik Shire Council between 8.00 AM and 5.00 PM. Poisons, solvents, pharmaceuticals, cleaners, empty aerosols, resins, oils, fuels, paints and thinners, or any other chemicals can be disposed of on this occasion. This is the only collection day in our area. For other sites and dates contact BICA committee. Ring Nillumbik Shire to confirm date about a month beforehand!



World Environment Day 1996

This year at our General Meeting on Sunday 2 June, celebrating World Environment Day, we had two very interesting speakers. One was David Cameron, a botanist from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (formerly DCNR); the other was David van Bockle, a ranger from Warrandyte State Park. They spoke about a four year long project that they had been working on. This was the identification and recording of all plant species in the Warrandyte State Park. This sort of project is not part of the normal duty of a park ranger and was primarily done in spare time with the help of members of The Friends of Warrandyte State Park.

The project involved collating as much information on each species as possible and documenting it for the future. This ensures that a correct status such as abundant, scarce or threatened can be made about any particular species and that a program to ensure survival of all species can be implemented. Samples of species were sent to the Herbarium to ensure correct identification and naming, photographs were taken and a full description written. The result of this work will be a fantastic data bank that will provide future park management with an accurate picture of the flora existing in the Park in the mid 1990s. An important aspect of the project was the mapping of the location of rare and threatened species for future reference, a feature which is at present lacking from our own records for the ELZ. It would be a worthwhile project to be undertaken for our important area.

Lynne Johnstone

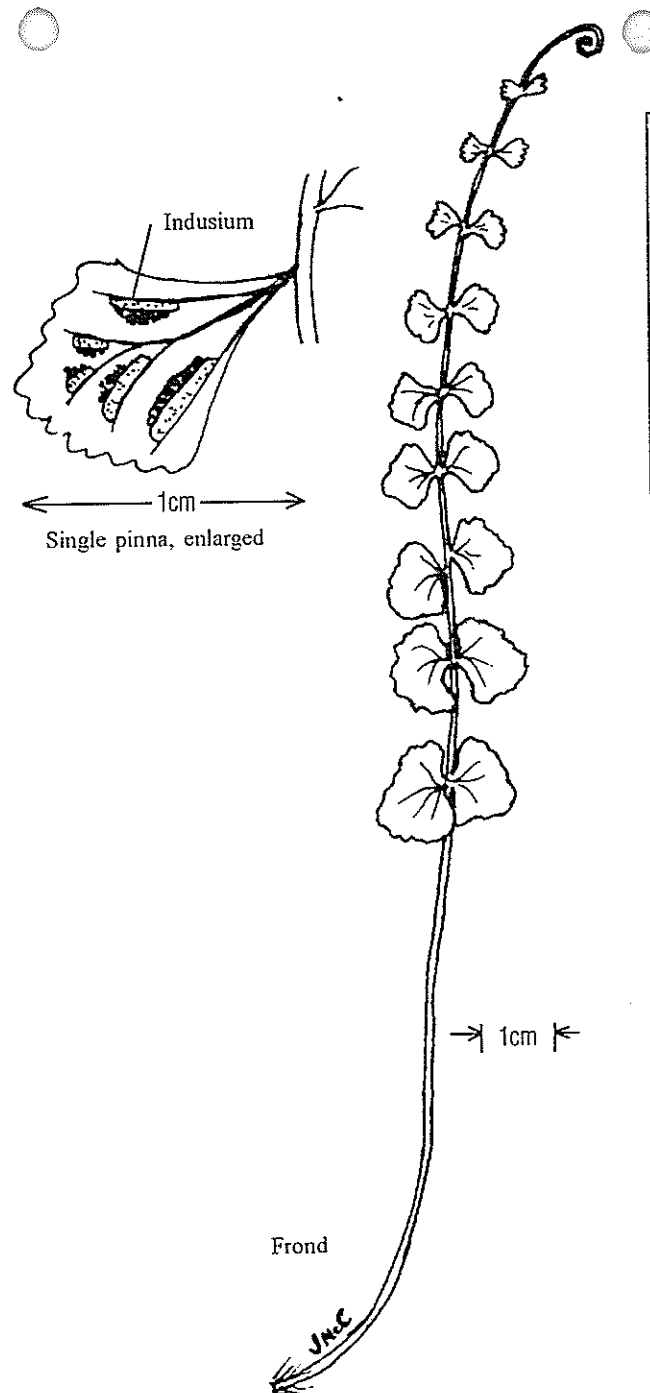
Local Ferns: Necklace Fern

The Necklace Fern, *Asplenium flabellifolium*, is found in the Bend of Islands only on steep banks in very damp gullies. Necklace Fern is a member of the Spleenwort family (Family Aspleniaceae), so named for their supposed curative powers of disorders of the spleen; wort is a word generally applied to plants that are supposed to have curative properties. Spleenworts are found all over the world, provided that the environment is right, and are often growing on rocks, other larger plants or as ground cover. Necklace Fern can be found in all of these situations and occurs in all states of Australia and in New Zealand.

One of the features that botanists use to identify ferns is the arrangement and shape of the bundles of sporecases (sori), usually found on the back of the frond. Necklace Fern, along with other members of the genus *Asplenium*, has distinctly linear sori, each one protected by a scale called an indusium which opens 'inwards', ie, towards the centre of the pinna (leaflet).

Necklace Fern has fronds which radiate from a short stem, each frond with its fan-shaped pinnae arranged alternately along the main axis (rachis). Unlike most other ferns Necklace Fern doesn't have a leaflet at the tip of the main axis of the frond. Often the bare end of the frond can take root and eventually produce another plant by vegetative (non-sexual) reproduction. The epithet *flabellifolium* in the scientific name for this plant means 'fan shaped leaves' and refers to the shape of the pinnae.

Look for Necklace Fern on your rambles in the bush. It is very decorative fern and the fronds do indeed look like strings of green beads.



The Next Issue

We want to issue one more BICA Newsletter this year. This means that we need your contributions to start rolling in NOW! Compiling each edition always seems to be a long drawn out process as we wait for sufficient copy to make a decent sized newsletter. Let's also see if we can streamline things a little by submitting illustrations with the text. They are easily scanned in.

Field Day Sunday

September 15:

'Walk, Talk, Gawk'

Mark this date on your calendar. Meet at 2.00 PM at C Track (19 Skyline Rd) for an afternoon walk to look and discover the glories of the bush!

Early BBQ evening meal at Janet Mattiske's home. BYO everything. If we are still enthusiastic we can have a night walk to spot our wonderful nocturnal creatures.

Join us for all or part of the event. Please park cars only on the road or designated parking areas.

All welcome of course.

Overpopulate And Perish?

Or

Economics & The Environment?

It took 800,000 years for the human population to reach a quarter of a billion people. It then took another seventeen centuries to double to reach a half a billion. We reached our first billion around 1830 and then in less than 150 years doubled twice to reach four billion. The world population is now more than 5 billion and increasing by 85 million people annually. At this rate we will double again to reach 10 billion by the year 2050.

When Europeans arrived in Australia the population was estimated to have been between 300,000 and 1.5 million. Seventy years later, the European population had reached one million. The current population of just over 18 million is set to double in the next 50-60 years based on current trends. If this occurs, the environmental, economic and social impacts will be considerable.

In the last decade Australia has had the highest per-capita rate of population increase in the First World which has resulted in some serious environmental problems including land degradation, loss of native forests, introduced plants and animals, salinisation, ozone depletion, increase in greenhouse gas emissions and pollution of waterways to name but a few.

Most of these problems can be directly linked to the increasing human population and in particular to our technology and affluent lifestyle. These problems will need to be tackled with determination if we are to achieve the goal of ecological

sustainability, which is the agreed aim of the Council of Australian Governments.

Sustainable development is arguably the central issue of our time. The basic aim is to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Support for this goal is now widespread. Following extensive consultation with all community sectors, Australian Governments adopted a National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) in 1992.

The strategy defines ESD as a pattern of development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.

Environmental awareness has increased dramatically in the past decade, penetrating all sections of the community. 69% of Australians over the age of 18 are concerned about at least one environmental problem.

Overall, economic planning appears to take little account of environmental impacts. It is assumed that the first priority should be a healthy economy, and that problems can always be solved using the wealth created. The economy is a subset of human society which in turn, is part of the environment. Progress towards sustainability requires recognition of this fundamental truth, and a willingness to build environmental thinking into our economic planning.

One of the most destructive myths that we face in society today is one that is held by a large percentage of conservative politicians, economists and

people in the western business world, and that is, in order to sustain the quality of life in society we must have sustained economic growth.

The term sustainable development creates the illusion that we can continue to have development and growth and still retain the natural environment in a healthy state. Growth and development are the cause of the current eco-crisis.

The notion of sustainable development has been perverted to the extent that politicians are now talking about sustainable growth!

People mistakenly believe that we can sustain the current level of growth just by being more environmentally responsible.

The idea that we can have either development and growth or protection of the environment must be rejected. As long as we continue to operate in this way we will never come to grips with the fact that the economy is absolutely dependent on the environment.

The economy is the air, the water, the soil and the diversity of life on this planet that allow us to live. I therefore do not understand why people can hold the view that in protecting the natural environment we sacrifice economics. Without the environment we have no economy.

By Steve Craig

Efficient Transport Service Proposal for the ELZ

Many large workplaces, like La Trobe University in Bundoora, have established car pool services. The car pool co-ordinator has information about people who travel to and/or from a particular place regularly and would either be prepared to take passengers or like to be a passenger on these trips.

The La Trobe University car pool service functions on a costing system based on RACV estimates which are fair to drivers and passengers. Passengers each pay the driver 15 c per km for the first 10 km, 10c per km for the next 20 km and 5c per km thereafter with a recommended \$1.00 minimum 'fare'. On the basis of these charges, a driver would receive around \$2.00 for taking one passenger from the ELZ to Eltham; double that for two passengers. This means that drivers are subsidised for money spent on fuel, oil, tyres and parking costs. The social aspect can mean less driver stress and fatigue.

Passengers too save money other spent on their own vehicle or public transport (this means a taxi in the ELZ). Reduced mileage helps maintain the value of vehicles left at home and a well established, reliable car pool service can reduce the need for a second car for a family. Most importantly the system is efficient for the environment; most cars driven in and out of the Bend of Islands contain only one occupant!

In an area like the ELZ a car pooling system can include school children, teenagers and other young or elderly people who rely on a second person to drive them to where they need to go. Thus the

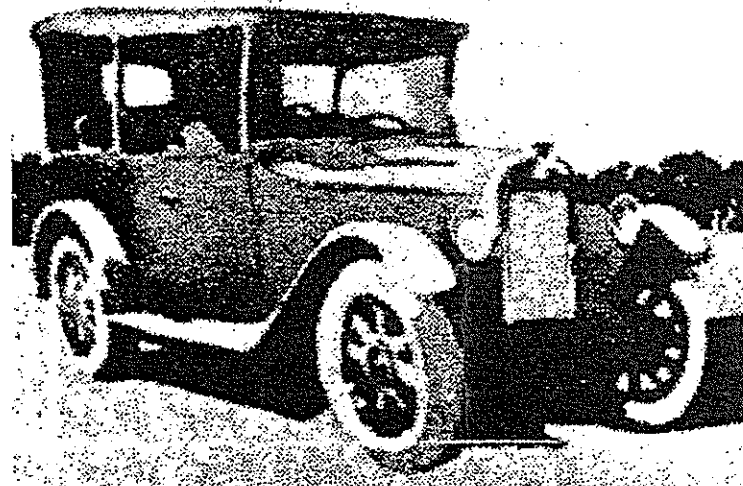
system saves people's time as well as their money! Given the particular situation of the ELZ our efficient transport service may even involve collecting mail or shopping jointly or severally on a regular basis.

The car pool co-ordinator at La Trobe University keeps all information confidential, using first name and phone numbers only. There is no obligation to travel with anyone that you might feel unsure of or whose car you consider unsafe. As well as the obvious financial and environmental advantages of car pooling it may well become another aspect of the special social web of our area.

If you have questions or further ideas about this proposal, or wish to register your name either as driver or passenger for a car pool scheme for the ELZ, contact me on 9846 2335

Anitra Nelson

Stop Press!
Eagles back on the same nest for the third year in a row!



Recycling Update

Glass bottles, aluminium cans, 'plastic' containers of various kinds carrying the recycling 'triangle', and milk cartons are still to be placed in the bag on Monday mornings for collection by Maroondah Recyclers on behalf of the Yarra Ranges Shire. This arrangement will continue until Nillumbik Shire Council renegotiates a contract.

Recyclable paper is collected once per month. The dates are set out in a flyer mailed out by Nillumbik Shire Council. The imminent dates for our area are: September 24, October 22, November 19.

Quadrats.

The quadrats that were erected on Felicity's and the Bonny's properties about three years ago are at last looking greener than adjoining control areas.

One of the quadrats on our block has fourteen *Acacia genistifolia* plants in it as well as several species of orchids. Maybe it's time to do another update survey on them.

Carol Bonny

A Special Place

Some places and times remain locked in the memory and can surface at unexpected times. One such for me has always been an early morning silence, standing on a mountain spur looking down into a valley winding towards the foothills of the Great Divide. A very special day, not only for what I saw but the pleasure of being alone at that place and discovering what it was all about.

I had left Melbourne for a wander in my Honda, driving and stopping where I pleased. I was coming back from the north and decided to stay the night in a caravan park in Toowoomba. By morning the weather was perfect and I felt like a part of the day and set off in the direction of the Queen Mary Falls near Killarney and close to the NSW - Queensland border.

Either Ms Honda wasn't concentrating or I just felt the need to keep wandering but we did miss those falls. The road changed to a narrow winding track and soon I found myself in the green magic of a rain forest. Tall cedars festooned with staghorn ferns, treeferns and that wonderful smell of damp and rotting vegetation which signifies a rain forest.

I must have passed the 22k mark when anxiety about Ms Honda's tyres and where I was heading began. Eventually I broke out into the sunshine and found myself on top of the small mountain that I had been climbing.

I got out of the car and walked to the edge of the spur. Way below in the valley was a willow skirted river winding into the foothills. Nearby was a very old wooden notice. I wish that I could remember

what it said but the message that it left was clear enough. It had been placed there in the thirties and commemorated a journey by surveyors to this area. It said that the river below was the Condamine and that this was one of the nearest sources of the greatest river system in Australia. This referred of course to the Murray-Darling.

I sat on the edge of the spur and felt a remarkable sense of belonging. It wasn't just the day or the view but a sense of being a late starter at the birth of a mighty river.

I love the Murray and have camped beside it many times. Here was a stream in its youth; not the yellow old man that I knew at Hattah. I don't know how long I stayed there but eventually I left to drive down the other side of the mountain which was even more hair-raising. At one stage I passed a rather mossy NSW border sign and came to a standstill in some piece of impassable country and was gazed on by some solemn looking mountain cattle.

I had to turn back because it was not the sort of place to get a flat tyre so I retraced my steps through that rainforest again. I did find the Queen Mary Falls which, although quite spectacular as falls generally are, seemed rather an anticlimax.

I think that it's nearly fourteen years now that I was at that beautiful place and though I won't be there again my memory travels there when I need to.

Sheila Dixon

Worms

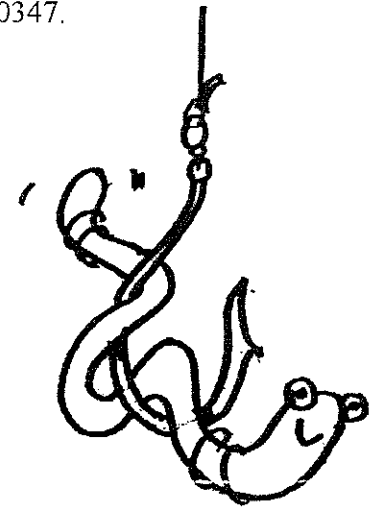
A note to remind readers that they do not have to dig up sensitive areas, particularly stream banks to get a supply of worms for fishing bait.

Usually there are plenty of large worms under cow pats. When harvesting these worms make sure that you put the cow pat back so that there are more there for next time.

Another suggestion is to keep a worm farm. You can buy these but they are easy to make. Just get three polystyrene boxes that supermarkets use to carry broccoli. Cut most of the bottom out of two of them and replace with fine wire mesh. Put all the kitchen scraps in the middle box with 50 to 100 worms (buy 1000 from a firm such as Worms 'R' Us, the more the better. The bottom box will fill with good fertilising liquid for pot plants. The second box will fill with good compost as you start to fill the top box.

For more advice and information including commercial sources of worms contact me by phone on 9712 0347.

Tim Ealy



Starting a Vegetable Garden

So, you want to start a veggie garden. You are, however, put off by rabbits, stones, clay soil with only half an inch of topsoil glaring at you. Well, that's what I saw when I first decided to build my house up here. But after working and living in Carlton and reading anything I could lay my hands on, the garden came before the house was built.

This piece is intended to give you an idea how I began and got to where I am now. It's been trial and error and a few favourite books on organic gardening and now I am still learning.

The important beginning. First the position. It just has to have sunshine. I know that that can be difficult in some areas but it's a waste of time trying to grow anything without it. If there's a bit of shade in a small area I can give you an idea of a few things that you can grow that don't mind this.

The next thing is protection against rabbits and birds. I first decided on the area that had the most sun and planned the fencing around that. I finished up with an 'L' shaped plot; vegies in one part and herbs, a bay tree and roses in the other. I used 3 cm chicken-wire on treated pine posts with concrete footings. It is nearly twelve years old and still going strong.

After the plot was fenced I had it all rotary hoed. This made it easier to remove a huge amount of stones and I will probably continue to do so for the rest of my days, but don't worry too much as the stones have minerals and trace elements to pass on to the soil. Then came the lovely part of deciding where to put the all important beds. Lots of time

indicators with sheets of paper drawing beds and filling them in with future vegies. I do this each year in early spring and it's one of the best gardening jobs of all. It's easy to change your mind on paper. Make sure that your heat loving plants are in the best place for full sun and don't forget you can use the chicken-wire walls for all climbing plants. When doing this though, think about what plants you'll be blocking from the sun. I tend to put climbers on the southern wall.

So far this is all very efficient but now comes the most important part! This is the preparation of the soil. When my plot was fenced and ready to go I had been bring up compost material from Carlton and starting a heap. I also just kept a certain amount to bury in little holes all over the beds. I had formed them by now into various combination. Long ones for narrow things like carrots, spring onions and so forth, square ones for the larger crops like corn, tomatoes and peppers. I made sure that I had a few permanent beds which were to be used only for 'asparagrass' and strawberries; these last for years.

Now the fertilising. In the paddock over Henley Road there was plenty of cow manure so there were many trips over there to bring this back. If I knew someone with chicken litter out a chook shed then I piled that on. A word of warning with chicken manure though. One day I piled it on the ground before spreading it on the garden and it caught fire by spontaneous combustion!

Next there is the all-important mulch. You have a few choices here. There is the old bale of lucerne hay you can get for seven or eight dollars but though it is high in protein and feeds the garden

bacteria with nitrogen, it tends to drop a lot of weeds. Next I tried bales of pea straw. Now this was far more successful; so far no weeds. It is not quite so nitrogenous but this is easily fixed by putting any animal manure on top of it. The worms then busy themselves by dragging the animal manure through the pea straw. The little darlings!

To recap on what is happening now..... Your beds are shaped with nice little paths running in between so that you can get at everything. If your area has a bit too much clay then a kilo of gypsum per square meter will help things along. Then on with some animal manure followed by either ready made compost or bits of fresh stuff dug straight into small holes. The worms will do the rest. Follow this with the pea straw and cover that with more animal manure. After a month or two all this will be like a giant hamburger for the soil and the worms. Bob's your uncle. No weeds, a complete worm farm and you're ready to go.

It's probably a bit late now as it is early spring but I have another trick up my sleeve. About May I sow one of the plants known as green manure. These are plants such as lupins or ryecorn which have nitrogen nodules on their roots. They grow quite happily in winter in beds where I am going to put nitrogen-loving vegies like greens.

Just this week (mid-August) I dug up two beds of lupins, made a trench, laid all the plants in it, covered the soil and informed the worms to get to work on it. This will be ready for tomatoes in

October. Tomatoes love beds that have been fed for a while beforehand.

Planting and the reason for all this hard work. At this time of the year I send off for my seed catalogues. You seem to pay for the first one and over the years they send them for nothing. I use Diggers Seeds and the New Gippsland Seed Farm. On a cold winter's day I sit buy the fire and marvel over the coloured photos of the vegies. I try to keep to the non-hybrids and think carefully what has been a success up here and what has not. We have a fairly cold Spring here and there's not much point putting tomatoes, peppers and cucurbits in too early.

October and November is time enough as they grow much quicker then. Though I put carrots and spring onions in early, a set I put in December came on more quickly. Corn is another crop that prefers warm weather. For most things I grow from seed but I find that tomatoes and corn are best grown from seedlings; they have a much better start in life and no setbacks from cold. I put those plastic guards round the tomatoes for a couple of weeks just to warm them up.

I raise my seedlings in a couple of ways. One is in a seed bed made like a wooden box with an old glass door hinged on top. The seed raising mixture is sandy loam, sphagnum moss and perlite in fairly equal proportions. Icy pole sticks are used to mark what I've planted and watch for ants. Don't let the box dry out and transplant when they look as though they can fend for themselves. I'm going to try something different this year with my large seeds such as cucumbers, zucchini and pumpkins. I have been saving the cardboard rollers from toilet

rolls. They will be filled with seed raising mixture and the seeds planted in them. I am going to sit them in a sunny window in by laundry and when its warm outside and the look healthy enough I'll plant them complete with the cardboard which will rot down. This will spare them the trauma of transplanting. Or so the story goes. Anything is worth a try.

The seedlings you buy must be good quality. It's no good getting cheapies at Coles or somewhere like that. They either don't water them or they go leggy and go into shock as soon as you plant them. Even though I have very little money to spare, I get mine from the Greenery near Fitzsimons Lane. They are superior quality and good backup advice is available. They have an excellent choice of varieties too.

Perhaps I could pass on a few unsuccessful vegies that I have tried. A big disappointment is egg-plant. I think that it is just not hot enough here. I have had a miserable few but they were very late and small. Last year I tried my hand at okra but hardly grew at all. I suspect they are a sub-tropical plant. Forget Brussels sprouts! All they do is call out for every aphid in the locality and I don't like spraying them. They are a real nuisance and best kept away. Cabbages in the summer can be a nuisance too; they seem put out flags for the Cabbage White butterflies which leave grubs all over everything. I grow my cabbages in winter and avoid that kind of trouble.

A very important spot in the garden is my special garbage bin. It is one third filled with one of the animal manures and then the bin is topped up with water. A few weeds can be dropped in now and

again and the whole lot left for a few weeks. Then it can be added to bucket of water until the mixture looks like weak tea. Pour this onto your plants and they will all sing you a song of praise! Other strange objects seen around the garden are plastic dishes with a couple of spoonfuls of porridge and filled with water. After a few days you will see that slugs have been leaping in a sluggy suicide into these dishes. Apparently they love porridge but can't get out and of course quietly drown. I prefer this method to snail bait. Also if you trail either wood ash or sawdust around the plants slugs won't cross it. The only trouble with this is that watering mucks it up.

Well, this is just the beginning but I think that I've given you a few ideas about starting up. I have quite a lot of gardening books but I think the one I've learned the most from is 'Australian and New Zealand Organic Gardening' by Peter Bennett. He is wonderful. With spring on the way the hard work is ahead of me and even though I'm stuck on the dialysis machine three days a week I still get out there. The secret is to never let it get away from you. If there are any questions you know where to find me

Sheila Dixon

